Coal-Fired Power Plant Approval Process

Introduction

This fact sheet explains Alberta Environment's process for approving power plants that burn coal to generate electricity. Approximately two-thirds of Alberta's electricity is generated by coal.

Alberta Environment regulates a wide range of industrial facilities in the province under Alberta's *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (EPEA), including coal-burning power plants. This is most commonly done through an Environmental Approval.

Under EPEA, any power plant that can produce more than one megawatt of electricity must have an approval from Alberta Environment. Coal-burning power plants must also have an approval issued under the *Water Act*, because they use considerable amounts of water.

Environmental Approvals

Environmental approvals are designed to ensure the environment is protected from a facility's operations. The approval sets out conditions for a facility's operations, including emission limits and the type of monitoring the facility must conduct.

How does a business or industry get an approval?

Any business or industry wanting to open a facility for which an environmental approval is required must apply to Alberta Environment. Before deciding whether or not to issue an approval and what its conditions should be, the department must first determine the potential effects of the proposed project on the environment. This involves an environmental review.

Environmental Review

Alberta Environment's environmental reviews ensure the department has the information and details it needs to determine a project's potential effects on the environment. The steps involved in the review process and the length of time it takes are determined by how much information the department needs.

Alberta's environmental reviews are open and they provide for full public participation, including public notification and opportunities to comment.

The review process for a situation where the effects are easy to determine will be simpler than the process for a situation where the effects are more difficult to determine. In cases where the effects are especially difficult to determine, the department may ask the project owners for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report

An EIA is the most comprehensive information-gathering tool Alberta Environment has at its disposal. The report looks at all aspects of potential environmental effects arising from the project and is prepared by the industry asking for the approval.

The need for an EIA is determined by the Director, Environmental Assessment and Compliance Division. The Director's decision is based on the size and nature of the issues involved in determining the project's environmental effects. The Director can request information from the public, industry and other government agencies to help decide whether or not an EIA is necessary.

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For some projects, an EIA report is mandatory. This is the case for any coal burning power plant that produces at least 100 megawatts of electricity. (One megawatt is sufficient to power about 1,000 homes.)

Alberta's EIA process, like other environmental reviews, is a process that allows for full public participation. It too includes public notification and opportunities to comment.

The steps in the regulatory process are set out in Appendix I and II of this document.

Need more information?

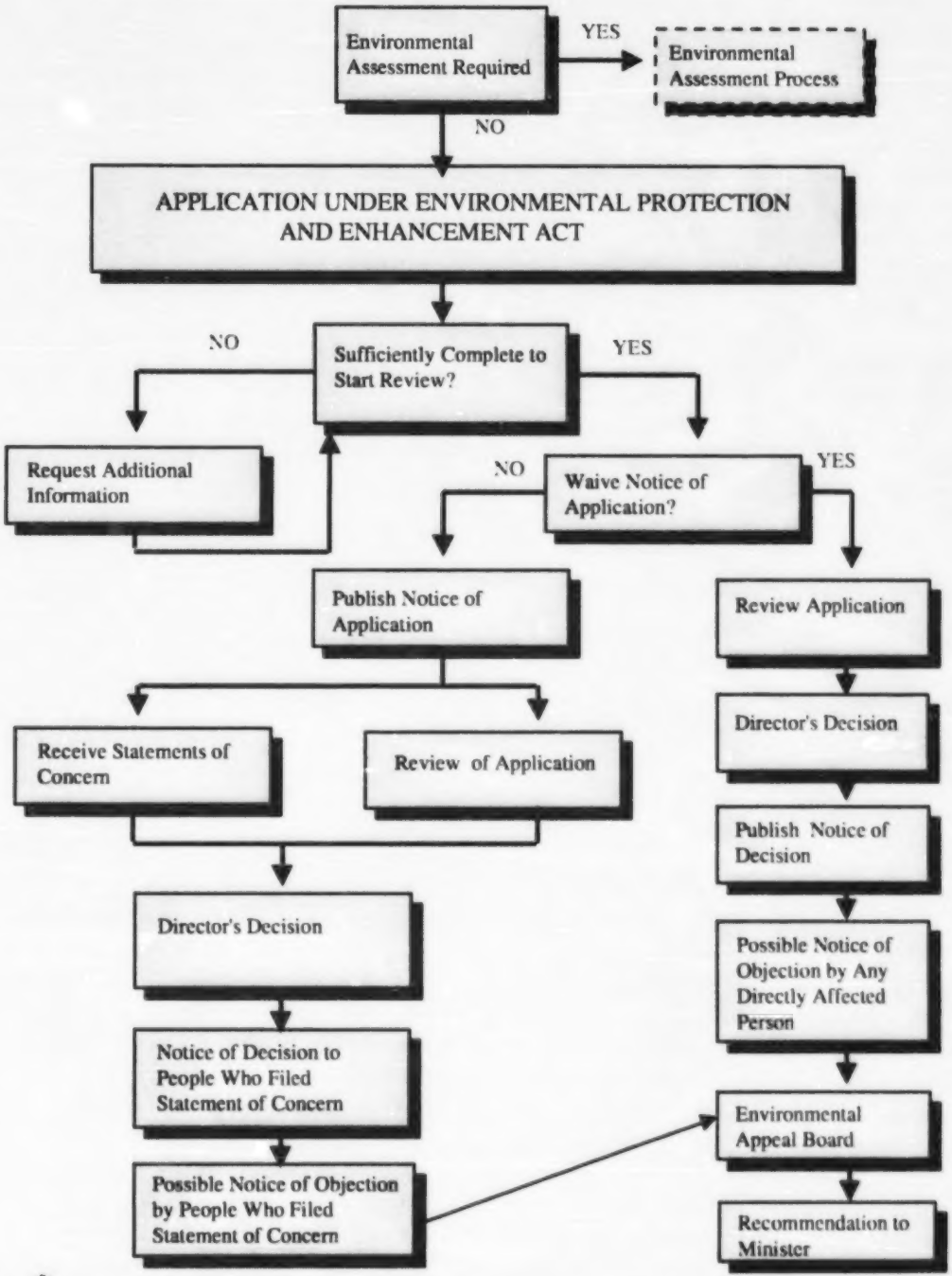
Further information about Alberta's environmental assessment process and how it may relate to you can be obtained from the department's website at www.gov.ab.ca/env, or by contacting us at the following:

Environmental Assessment and Compliance Division
Alberta Environment
12th Floor, Petroleum Plaza, South Tower
9915 – 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2G8
Phone: (780) 427-5828
Fax: (780) 427-1594
E-mail: environmental.assessment@gov.ab.ca

Any person may, during normal business hours, examine information contained in the public Register of Environmental Assessment Information and may obtain one copy of any register document, free of charge. The Register contains information on projects that are currently undergoing the environmental assessment process.

For information about Environmental Approvals, contact the nearest Alberta Environment Regional Office (See Appendix III).

APPENDIX I



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APPENDIX II

Alberta's Environmental Assessment Process
PROPOSED ACTIVITY
INITIAL REVIEW
MANDATORY ACTIVITIES
NON MANDATORY
EXEMPT
SCREENING
PUBLIC NOTICE OF DECISION TO SCREEN PROJECT
SCREENING REPORT
DECISION
NO EIA
EIA
PREPARATION OF PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE
PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INPUT
DIRECTOR ISSUES FINAL TERMS OF REFERENCE
TERMS OF REFERENCE MADE PUBLIC
SUBMISSION OF EIA REPORT TO DIRECTOR
EIa REPORT AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW
TECHINICAL REVIEW OF EIA REPORT
DIRECTOR DETERMINES EIA REPORT IS COMPLETE
PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION
REGULATORY APPROVAL PROCESS

APPENDIX III

Regional Approval Contacts
Alberta Environment

Northwest Boreal Region
Approvals Manager
2nd Floor, Provincial Building
9621 – 96 Avenue
Peace River T8S 1T4
Phone: (780)624-6126

Northeast Boreal Region
Approvals Manager
111 Twin Atria
4999 – 98 Avenue
Edmonton T6B 2X3
Phone: (780)427-7617

Northern East Slopes Region
Approvals Manager
107 Provincial Building
111 – 54 Avenue
Edson T7E 1T2
Phone: (780)723-8370

Parkland Region
Approvals Manager
3rd Floor Provincial Building
4920 – 51 Street
Red Deer T4N 6K8
Phone: (403)340-7052

Bow Region
Approvals Manager
2nd Floor, Deerfoot Square
2938 – 11 Street NE
Calgary T2E 7L7
Phone: (403)297-7602

Prairie Region
Approvals Manager
3rd Floor, Provincial Building
200 – 5 Avenue S
Lethbridge T1J 4L1
Phone: (403)381-5322

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